

NEW PEAKS IN TALL MANHATTAN'S RANGE

New York Completes
the Highest Office
Buildings in All
the World

By H. I. BROCK

THE Tower of Babel is still a-building in spite of the confusion of tongues and the diffusion of scientific information to the effect that the original aspiration of tower builders—setting up a scaling ladder to high heaven—is an unrealizable dream. If we may not climb to heaven on stairways of stone, by way of a Great Pyramid, or on ladders of steel, by way of the Chrysler Building, we never cease to set up landmarks that point heavenward and thrust deeper and still deeper into the blue vault of the sky. Today New York has the tallest building in the world. Counting a lot of superimposed top-hamper and a flag pole on the top of that, it is 1,030 feet high.

The Great Pyramid stands 450 feet high, so that it has taken us several thousand years to do little more than double the record made by Pharaoh's engineers. In the very year in which that record was first doubled—by the Eiffel Tower, with an official height of 984 feet—New York raised her own mark for the highest office structure in the world by setting up the boxlike mass of the Park Row building with a couple of cupolas or pepper-pots on top reaching up to 390 feet. That was in 1889. Before that The World's gilded dome reigned supreme at 375 feet. Already the spire of Cologne Cathedral had gone the Egyptians 65 feet better and the Washington Monument had them beaten by 105 feet. So the office building still lagged behind.

At the moment our skyline has two screeching high notes, each the climax of a chorus of high notes and each an office building. The Chrysler Building, stabbing up out of the tall thicket of new architecture that hedges about the Grand Central Station, is almost matched by the Bank of the Manhattan Company's bid for first skyscraping honors, shooting out of the heart of the downtown acropolis of finance and giving that group a higher accent than the Woolworth tower has of late been able to give it. The Chrysler Building, representing the mushroom up to date motor industry, outdoes even the Eiffel Tower and thus robs Paris of world primacy in man-made structures upward bound. The Bank of the Manhattan Company's entry, which falls short of its immediate rival by 105 feet (according to the official figures) must still yield place to France's entry, but overtops everything else of the sort in the world—except the Chrysler Building. That veteran local recordholder, the Woolworth tower, is left all of 133 feet below. And the Bank of the Manhattan Company is so old an institution in New York that the new high building actually becomes an enduring monument to the ancient fatal feud between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr. It was Burr, as all good New Yorkers know, who founded the bank in the innocent guise of a water company because Hamilton blocked the getting of a bank charter in the regular way.

THUS the old and the new combine to make and remake New York in its latest image, which is a city humped like a camel. The city's two humps are below Central Park and these two buildings are the sharp points on the humps. Very sharp points they are. You can see both of them with great effect from the Jersey side of the Hudson on a clear day. Or—again on a clear day—you can see both humps from the Queensboro Bridge. And a grand sweep it is—the camel being viewed off the port quarter



The World's Most Lofty Structure Is the Chrysler Building.

Richings On This Page and the One Following Are by Anton Schutz.

Skyline of the City
Now Stands Above
the Height of the
Eiffel Tower

aft, as it were. If you wish to carry out the simile and remember that you are speaking of a ship of the desert the two tallest towers may do duty as horns of the saddle.

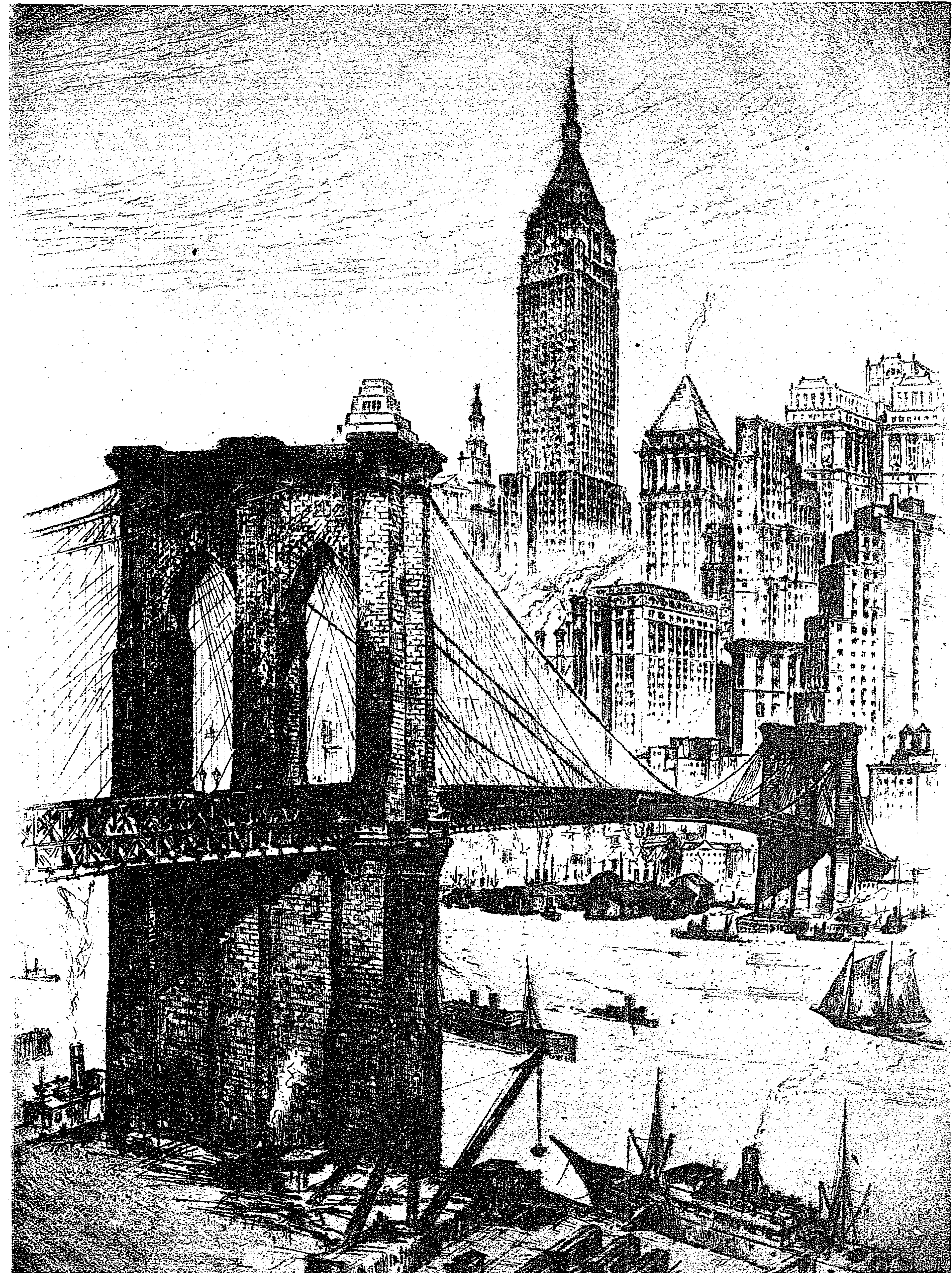
Of course, this is only the picture of the moment. The Woolworth Building ruled our sky for nearly a quarter of a century. But the reign of these two modern upstarts is likely to be brief. Where only a few months ago the Waldorf stood so staid and solid, a building is on the way which has set its mark above 1,200 feet. That building will change the high accent of midtown and set the pitch almost or quite 200 feet higher. The altitude record of the ancient Egyptian builders will not be trebled—not quite—but that goal will be in sight. With another ambitious entry (that of the Metropolitan Life) off Madison Square and yet another where the Hippodrome stands it is easy to imagine the scenic set-up and the skyline of mid-Manhattan utterly transformed before another February has rolled around. What next February's skyline will be like it would take a rash guesser to say. But it will be different. July's skyline will be a new skyline, for that matter.

NOR is it the skyline alone that changes. From the windows of new buildings and old are new views that plunge into canyons and deep-cut vistas dark-shadowed or cut across with stripes of shadow and of light where the avenues catch the sun around noonday or a gap in the thicket of towers spills a patch of brightness. Extraordinary effects they are—and the more extraordinary as the view plunges more steeply from the tallest new towers, more than one of which now furnishes almost an airplane sweep of the map of the city and the land and water about it. From the Chrysler Building the view on one of our brightest days would reach over and past the towers of downtown, beyond the Narrows, and overlook wide swaths of Long Island and New Jersey. As a matter of fact a man on top of the building is half as high up as the airplane is supposed to keep with the buildings of the city beneath it, and perhaps at 1,000 feet his vision might more easily pierce the pall of smoke than would the aviator's at 2,000.

What the plunging vistas are like is well illustrated in the accompanying view along Forty-second Street, with the Chrysler tower as the main objective. Far below lies the busy crosstown thoroughfare, the Grand Central Station and the ramp of the Park Avenue viaduct where it bridges the street on its roundabout way to bring the traffic together again north of the twin gateways of the blue-and-gold-topped New York Central Building, the portal of our Spenders' Lane. Brand new in the view, besides the Chrysler Building, is the Lincoln Building with its effect of gigantic Gothic windows more than a hundred feet high—the actual windows seeming like panes of glass in the spectacular arrangement of which they are a part.

In the other view it is the veteran towers of Brooklyn Bridge that furnish the foreground and the contrast with the runner-up (for the time being) in the race of our towers. If the race itself is a competition in advertising, so, in a manner of speaking, have been all the competitions in tall buildings from the time when Pharaoh vied with Pharaoh, matching tomb against tomb, to the pious rivalry of the cathedral builders, each seeking to raise a pointed arch or a spire nearer to God.

HIGHER AND STILL HIGHER THE CITY SOARS



The New Bank of Manhattan Building Dominates the Mighty Ramparts of Lower Manhattan.

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